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ABSTRACT

This working paper outlines several issues that federal and state policymakers face in implementing the Carl Perkins Amendments of 1990. Each of 11 issues is presented with a brief comment outlining several alternatives, to serve as the basis for discussion. Since it is designed to stimulate discussion, this document does not present any recommendations. The 11 issues are: Should federal or state policy makers establish further restrictions of what constitutes integration of academic and vocational education? Which approaches for integration at the secondary levels are appropriate for federal funding? What kind of process should states establish to set policies and develop state plans? What constitutes a "coherent sequence of courses" required by the Perkins amendments of federally funded programs? How can districts give priority to sites that serve the highest concentrations of special population members and that programs be "of such size, scope, and quality as to be effective"? What additional state or federal policies should be developed to govern programs in area vocational schools? What should states require in local applications, in addition to the requirements embodied in the Perkins Amendments? What should federal or state policy require in the timing of reforms? What steps can policy-makers take to prevent integrated programs from being resegregated from other high school programs? How should policy-makers formulate policies related to integration at the postsecondary level? and What other policies could states use to support the integration of academic and vocational education? (NLA)

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INTEGRATING ACADEMIC AND VOCATIONAL EDUCATION: ISSUES IN IMPLEMENTING THE CARL PERKINS AMENDMENTS OF 1990

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INTEGRATING ACADEMIC AND VOCATIONAL EDUCATION:

ISSUES IN IMPLEMENTING THE CARL PERKINS AMENDMENTS OF 1990

This documents outlines several issues that federal and state policy-makers face in implementing the Carl Perkins Amendments of 1990. It is based on research sponsored by the National Center for Research in Vocational Education, the University of California, Berkeley. I present each issue with a brief comment outlining several alternatives, intended to serve as the basis for discussion. Since it is designed to stimulate discussion, this document does not present any recommendations.

1. Should federal policy-makers in OVAE establish further definitions and restrictions of what constitutes integration of academic and vocational education, or should these decisions be left to states?

Federal decision-making assumes that states left to their own devices may use federal funds for purposes inconsistent with federal intent or for on-going and unreformed programs. State decision-making assumes that the states should play an essential role in defining reforms and adapting them to local conditions.

2. Given a variety of approaches or models for integrating academic and vocational education at the secondary level, which approaches are appropriate for federal funding?

NCRVE research* has identified at least eight models of integration, ranging in ambition and scope from modest efforts to increase remedial education within existing vocational courses to ambitious efforts to restructure high schools around curriculum clusters, with many variations possible within each of these models.

At one extreme, federal or state policy could allow any of these approaches. This might be particularly appropriate because efforts to integrate academic and vocational education are still in their infancy, and premature prescription of what integration is might stifle innovation. Alternatively, policy could disallow certain approaches (e.g., the conception of integration only as remedial education, or the adoption of an isolated course like Principles of Technology or Applied Mathematics) or could specify one or two approaches to be used by all districts.

Still another alternative is to view integration as a progress in which schools might begin with relatively simple efforts, and move successively along a continuum of increasingly ambitious changes. From this dynamic perspective, it is important to allow districts to start with modest reforms as the basis for subsequent, more substantial innovations.

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* W. Norton Grubb et al.,*"The Cunning Hand, The Cultured Mind": Models for Integrating Academic and Vocational Education*, NCRVE, University of California, Berkeley, March 1990.

3. Given the complexity of integrating academic and vocational education, what kind of process should states establish to set policies and develop state plans?

At one extreme, developing a state plan can be viewed as a burdensome and bureaucratic exercise in complying with federal requirements, with little participation of districts required. At the other extreme, states could use the procedures for establishing policies as vehicles for thorough statewide discussion of the issues, with the goal of learning from districts about their current activities and proposals, and of enhancing the willingness and ability of local districts to reform their programs.

4. What constitutes a "coherent sequence of courses", required by the Perkins Amendments of all federally-funded programs?

The requirement of a coherent sequence, which suggests integration of academic and vocational education over time as well as integration of material in the courses students take at any one time, presumably prohibits districts from simply adding individual courses to their existing offerings, or using federal funds to make improvements in individual courses. However, either federal or state policy could further clarify how many courses constitute a sequence and what "coherent" means.

5. How can the requirement that districts "give priority for assistance...to sites or programs that serve the highest concentrations of individuals who are members of special populations" be reconciled with the requirement that programs be "of such size, scope, and quality as to be effective"?

A literal reading of the first requirement implies that all federal funds be allocated to sites and programs with the highest concentrations of special populations, regardless of whether or not these are schools with substantial, high-quality vocational programs, supportive administrators and teachers, or students interested in integrated curricula. A broader interpretation would allow districts the freedom to balance the need to serve special populations with the need to initiate reforms in those schools with the greatest chances of success.

6. What additional state or federal policies should be developed to govern programs in area vocational schools?

On the one hand, in many regions area vocational schools are virtually the only secondary institutions which still have substantial vocational programs and which can meet the requirement that programs be "of such size, scope, and quality as to be effective". On the other hand, the distance of area vocational schools from feeder high schools sometimes causes problems in integrating academic and vocational work, and the division of funding between high schools and area vocational school sometimes discourages participation.

Federal and state officials may want to consider both programmatic and fiscal policies to take advantage of high-quality vocational programs in area schools, while addressing the potential problems with using such schools to enhance integration.

7. What should states require in local applications, in addition to the requirements embodied in the Perkins Amendments?

The requirements in the Perkins Amendments are already substantial. However, to the extent that federal or state regulation specifies particular approaches to integration, or further defines other elements of integration like coherent sequences of courses, further requirements in local applications may be necessary.

Like the process for establishing state policy, the process of developing local plans can either be viewed as a burdensome requirement of the Perkins Amendments, or it can be structured more positively as the first step in an on-going process which enhances the willingness of vocational and academic teachers to collaborate.

8. What should federal or state policy require in the timing of reforms?

In a literal interpretation, the Perkins Amendments state that programs receiving federal funding already adhere to the requirement of integrating vocational and academic education. However, in every school that has attempted some form of integrating academic and vocational education, the process has taken more time than anticipated; even five years may be too little time to accomplish significant changes. From this perspective it may be wise to allow reforms to be phased in over realistic periods of time. In particular, if states decide to take the approach of allowing districts to start with modest changes and then move to more ambitious reforms (outlined in issue 2 above), then it will be important to allow sufficient time for implementation.

9. What steps can state and federal policy-makers take to prevent integrated programs from being re-segregated from other high school programs?

In many federal programs emphasizing special populations, schools have established separate programs including only members of special populations as the easiest way of complying with federal regulations. This has often produced programs disconnected from the rest of the institution. Along these lines, one possible response to the Perkins Amendments would be to create a new "track" of integrated academic and vocational education — for example, sequences of applied academics courses and vocational courses — that would continue to be separated from the mainstream of the high school and would continue to separate vocational or work-bound students (or students from special populations) from academic or college-bound students.

Federal and state officials might want to consider policies to forestall such separation. These policies might include fiscal regulations — for example, to clarify that federal funds can be spent on programs that benefit students who are not from special populations — as well as programmatic goals designed to minimize separation.

10. How should federal and state policy-makers formulate appropriate policies related to the integration of vocational and academic education at the *postsecondary* level?

The requirements related to the integration of academic and vocational education in the Perkins Amendments apply equally to secondary and postsecondary programs. However, because there have been relatively few efforts to integrate academic and vocational education at the postsecondary level, it is not entirely clear what such integration in community colleges, technical institutes, and area vocational schools serving adults might mean. Among the possibilities are the following:

a. Creating coherent programs of study which link appropriate math and science courses with occupationally-specific course, and which allow academic and vocational teachers planning time to coordinate or align their course content.

b. Developing counseling, guidance, financial aid, student tracking mechanisms and other changes to make sure that students complete coherent sequences of academic and vocational courses already in place. This change may be especially important because of the relatively large proportion of students who fail to complete postsecondary vocational programs.

c. Developing new programs that are inherently interdisciplinary — for example, programs in Materials Science, or in Environmental Restoration and Waste Management.

d. Developing new courses that integrate material from academic disciplines with material from vocational subjects, including new courses that might be part of general education requirements. Examples include the programs established as a result of the Shared Vision Task Force, *Integrating the Humanities into Associate Degree Occupational Programs*. Presumably any new courses would have to be part of a "coherent sequence of courses" required by the Perkins Amendments.

e. For those students in need of remediation, developing new forms of remedial or developmental education that teach basic academic competencies in the context of specific vocational areas. This might include assigning academic teachers to vocational courses, or allowing academic and vocational teachers to develop new modules or courses, or assigning vocational instructors to existing student learning centers.

Just as federal and state policy-makers need to clarify what approaches are allowable at the secondary level (issue #2 above), they may want to consider whether they need to shape or constrain local responses at the postsecondary level as well. As in the case of discussions around secondary policies (issue #6), this process can be viewed either as a centralized and bureaucratic task, or as a process which enlists the participation of postsecondary institutions to define what problems facing their vocational students might best be addressed by different forms of integration. Finally, as in the case of integrating academic and vocational education at the secondary level, policy-makers may want to institute a process of sequential change, where postsecondary institutions begin with modest reforms as the basis for subsequent efforts.

11. What other policies could states use to support the integration of academic and vocational education?

Beyond the scope of federal legislation, states have other educational policies which could be used to support integration, or which may need to be changed so as not to impede integration. For example, in some states the course approval process has slowed the adoption of new, integrated courses; therefore states may want to examine such policies as course approval mechanisms, graduation requirements, college entrance requirements, exit exams, and other standardized tests. States may also want to consider their funding mechanisms, to see whether state funding for vocational and academic programs should be used to supplement or match federal funds for integration; this may be especially appropriate because integration requires the participation of academic education, for which there is substantial state support but virtually no federal support. Finally, states may want to examine their teacher training policies and programs, to educate another generation of teachers more receptive to interdisciplinary teaching.